

# AIDS Among Kentucky Women

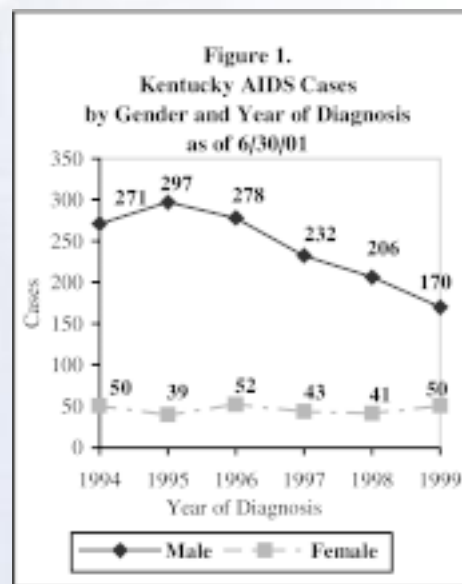
**A**cquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most severe phase of infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). People infected with HIV have AIDS when they have certain opportunistic infections or when their CD4+ cell count drops below 200. AIDS remains a serious public health problem in Kentucky. As of June 30, 2001, there have been 3,481 Kentuckians reported with AIDS of which 1,774 are still living. The total number of females reported with AIDS in Kentucky is 458 and of these 275 are still living.

## WOMEN AND THE EPIDEMIC

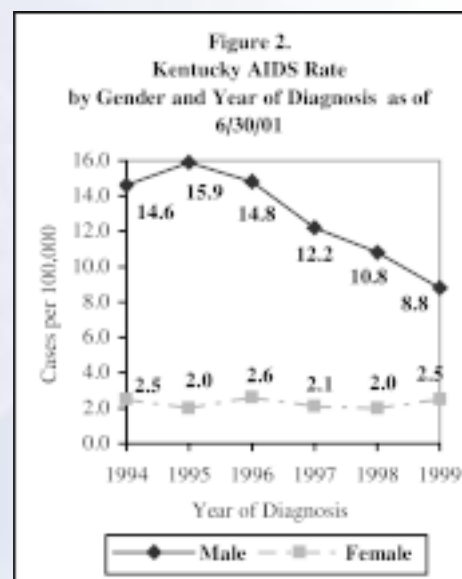
Advances in antiretroviral therapies and treatments for opportunistic infections, which were introduced in 1996, have reduced AIDS incidence and deaths among Kentuckians. Women in Kentucky, however, have not benefited at the same rate as men. While the number of new AIDS cases diagnosed among males decreased 42 percent from 297 cases in 1995 to 170 cases in 1999, the number of new AIDS cases diagnosed among females remained relatively constant throughout the same time period. (Fig. 1) Similarly, a slower decline is observed in the estimated number of AIDS deaths among women compared to men. Estimated AIDS deaths among

Kentucky males declined 71 percent from 1995 to 1999 while only declining 33 percent among Kentucky females during the same time period.

The average male AIDS rate is approximately 6 times higher than the average female



SOURCE: Department for Public Health - HIV/AIDS Branch

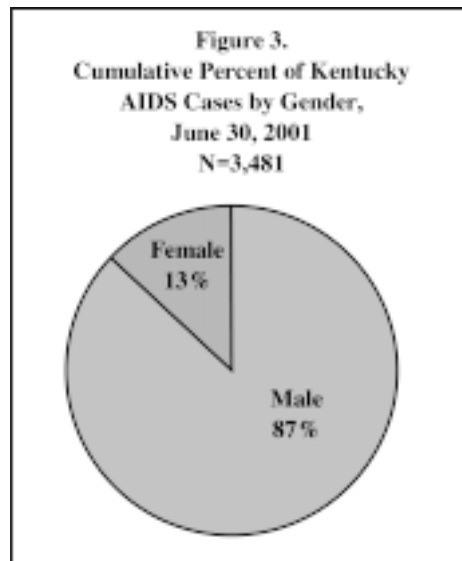


SOURCE: Department for Public Health - HIV/AIDS Branch

rate. However, the percentage of female AIDS cases has increased in recent years. (Fig. 2) Approximately 87 percent of all Kentucky AIDS cases reported are male. (Fig. 3)

Women account for a growing number of newly diagnosed AIDS cases each year. The proportion of AIDS cases among women has increased from 6 percent in 1985 to 23 percent in 1999. (Fig. 4)

Compared to other states, Kentucky ranked 33rd in the number of female AIDS cases reported per 100,000 population, with an incidence rate of 2.4 per 100,000 for the year 2000. (Fig. 5)



SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch

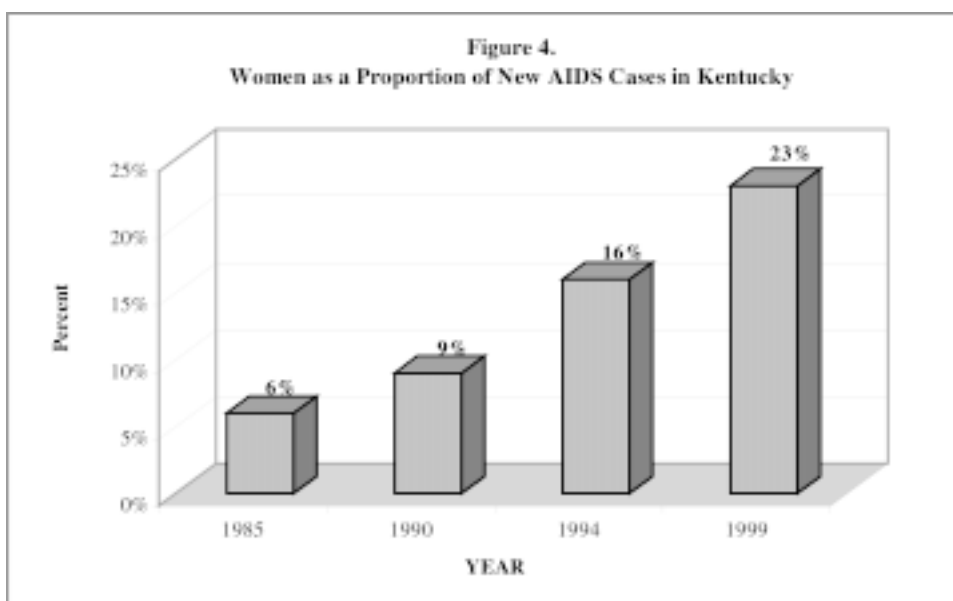
## AGE

The majority of female AIDS cases in Kentucky, 44 percent, are diagnosed in their thirties. The median time from HIV infection to

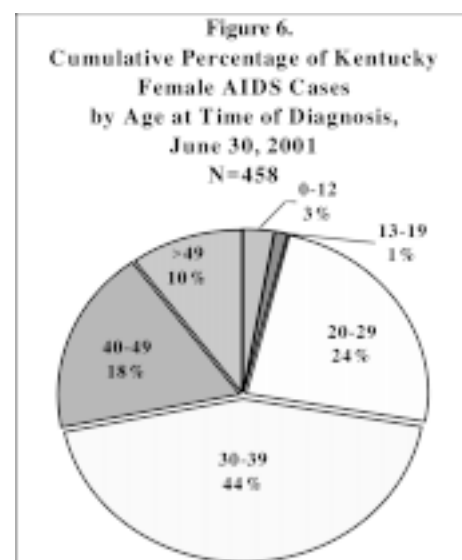
**Figure 5.**  
Female AIDS Rate per 100,000  
A Comparison of Kentucky  
to Other States  
Year of Report 2000

Rank	State Name	Rate
1	District of Columbia	87.8
2	New York	23.4
3	Florida	21.3
4	Maryland	20.2
5	Delaware	19.4
*	*	*
*	*	*
33	Kentucky	2.4
U.S. Rate = 8.7		

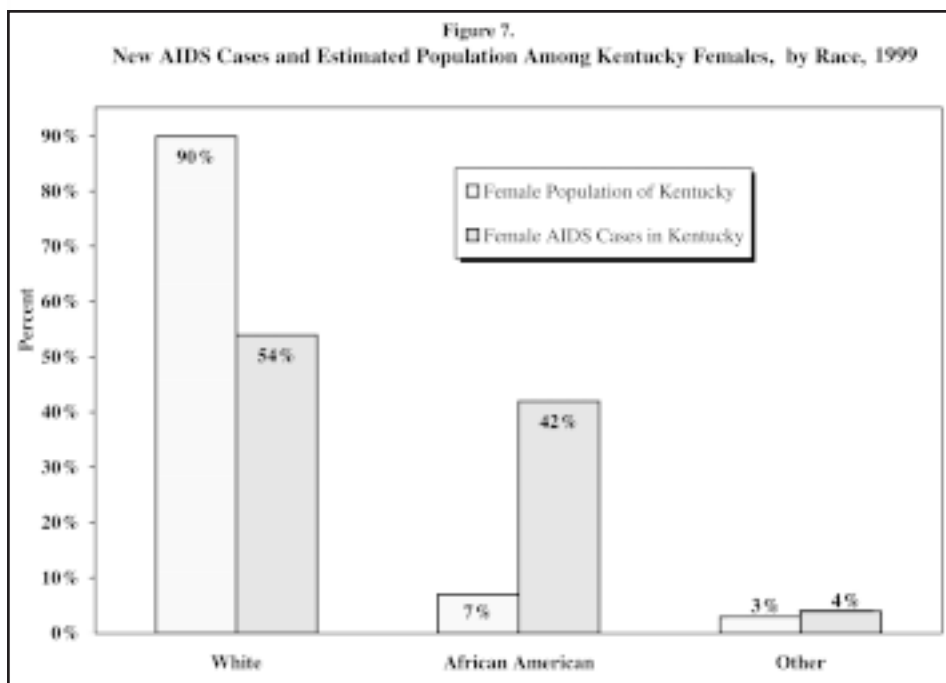
SOURCE: CDC, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, Year-End Edition, 2000, (No. 2):12



SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch



SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch

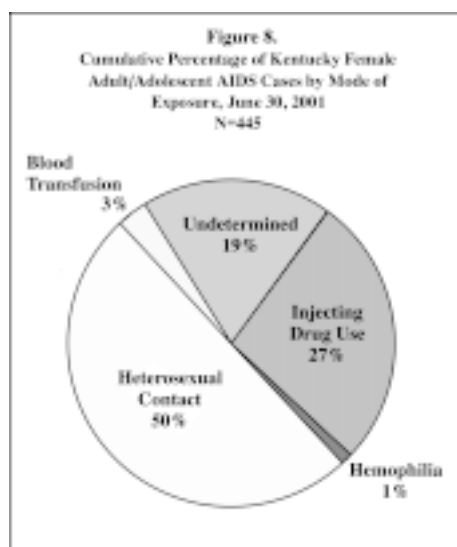


SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch

AIDS progression is ten years so many of these cases may have become HIV infected in their twenties. The next highest percentage of female AIDS cases is among adults in their twenties at 24 percent, followed by adults in their forties at 18 percent. (Fig. 6)

## RACE

The majority of female AIDS cases in Kentucky, 52 percent, are White



SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch

however, African-American women have been disproportionately affected by the AIDS epidemic in Kentucky. For example, in 1999 African Americans comprised 7 percent of the total female population in Kentucky yet accounted for 42 percent of the newly diagnosed AIDS cases among all women in that year. (Fig. 7) This disparity is most clearly seen in the AIDS case rate. In 1999 the AIDS case rate for African-American women in Kentucky was 13.9 per 100,000 population compared to a case rate of 0.8 per 100,000 population for women of White and other Non-White races. The AIDS rate for African-American women is approximately 17 times higher than that for women of White and other Non-White races.

## MODE OF EXPOSURE

HIV is transmitted to women by three primary routes: sexual, parenteral (blood-borne) and perinatal (from mother to child). HIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact such as hugging or shaking hands, surface contact such as using public restrooms, or from insect bites.

### Sexual Transmission

HIV is transmitted more efficiently from men to women than from women to men during sexual intercourse. Having another sexually transmitted disease (STD) can increase susceptibility to HIV infection. Among adult/adolescent Kentucky women with AIDS, sexual transmission constitutes 50 percent of reported cases as of June 30, 2001. (Fig. 8)

## Parenteral Transmission

Parenteral transmission of HIV has occurred in recipients of blood and blood products through transfusions and transplants and in injecting drug users (IDU) through the sharing of needles. The number of Kentucky AIDS cases who contracted the disease through blood, blood products, and transplants has declined since 1992 due to improved screening of blood products which was initiated in 1985. The second highest mode of exposure percentage for Kentucky women reported with AIDS is IDU at 27 percent. (Fig. 8)

## Perinatal Transmission

Perinatal transmission of AIDS from mother to child can occur during pregnancy, during labor and delivery, and from ingesting infected breast milk. Kentucky has had very few AIDS cases reported resulting from perinatal transmission. The greatest number of perinatal AIDS cases, 5, were diagnosed in 1996. There has been a decline in perinatal AIDS cases with only four cases having been diagnosed since 1996.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Kentucky Medical Association currently support HIV testing for pregnant women. Early detection among pregnant women is important because administering treatment to the mother during pregnancy and delivery and to the child through six weeks after birth reduces the risk of HIV transmission from the mother to the infant by two-thirds.

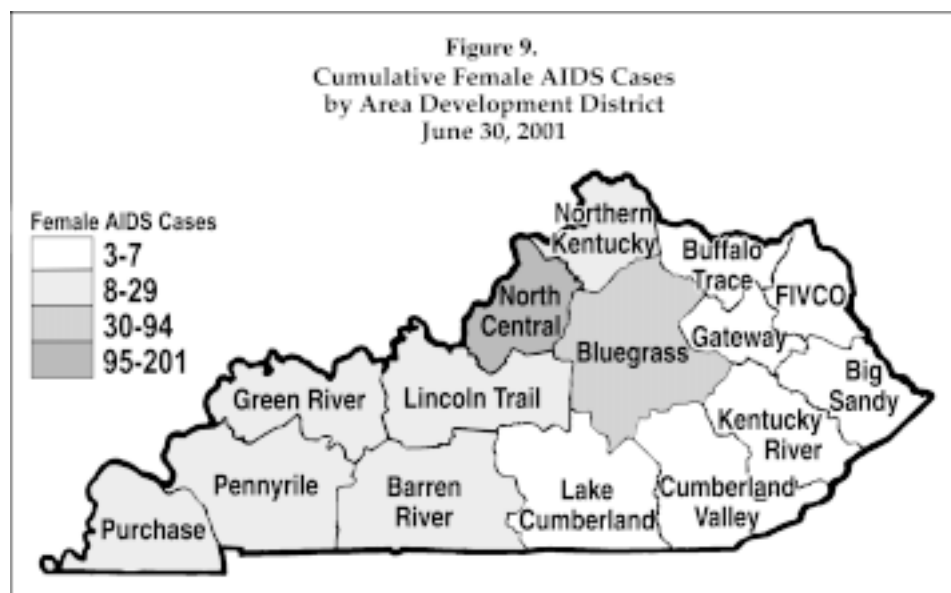
## DISTRIBUTION

The impact of the AIDS epidemic among females in Kentucky is not uniformly distributed across the state. The majority of female AIDS cases, 44 percent, reported that the North Central Area Development District (ADD), which includes Louisville, was their ADD of residence at time of diagnosis. The next highest percentage, 21 percent, resided in the Bluegrass ADD, which includes Lexington, followed by Northern Kentucky at 6 percent. (Fig. 9)

## CONCLUSION

In Kentucky, females represent 13 percent of the total AIDS cases reported and 16 percent of living AIDS cases. While the AIDS incidence rate for Kentucky has been declining in recent years, the incidence rate for females in the state has remained stable. Targeted prevention efforts for females especially African American females must continue. These initiatives must target women at risk for

HIV infection and must continue to encourage HIV testing among all pregnant women in order to reduce further the number of children infected with HIV through perinatal transmission.



SOURCE: Department for Public Health – HIV/AIDS Branch